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A drop of golden sun



The Hindu

Tunes of Salzburg: At the concert. Photo: R. Ravindran

The concert by The Sound of Salzburg Show was a mix of nostalgia and mellow, burnished sound

There's a wonderfully still moment at the start of your favourite musical. It's when the lights dim and you are visited by ghosts from a childhood past. Memories of a rainy day when the film was screened in school, the cobblestone lanes of a quaint town framed by the Alps, an imposing fortress, an ancient abbey, a Baroque church, a turquoise river and a composer whose music headlines festivals around the world. And although you know the truth about the Von Trapp family you are tricked once again through the whimsical magic of Rodgers and Hammerstein into being "blessed with the Sound of Music".

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart has for long been celebrated as a global brand and his magnificent symphonies put his hometown Salzburg on the map of the world. Another export from this town, the 1965 Robert Wise film *Sound Of Music* went on to win acclaim and continues to evoke nostalgia in those who've watched it unceasingly all their growing-up years.

This was why Bala J. Raman, the past president of the Rotary Club of Madras East decided to invite The Sound Of Salzburg Show to perform in the city for a charity concert at The Music Academy. The dinner show has been one of the most famous in Salzburg since 1991 and has birthed a wonderful sing-along movement.

Evergreen melodies

Founded by Franz Langer, pianist and director, the show was first thought of when he “witnessed tourists crowding around the gazebo where Liesel and Rolf dance”. Since then the show has travelled to 27 countries performing songs not only from the film but also Austrian folk music, operettas and merry tunes and melodies by Mozart.

The stage had no mountain ranges, rippling brooks or baronial pile but when Christa Hermetsberger hit the high C in ‘The Hills Are Alive’ you immediately recognised the novice who went on to become a governess to the Von Trapp children. Christa cavorted through the cloisters in her dirndl with her fulsome voice and ready smile and eased gently into ‘I Have Confidence’. The interactive ‘Do-Re-Mi’ that followed had all five choir members, Max Proding, Diana Paul, Alois Pillichshammer and Agnieszka Lis voicing their parts back and forth in perfect harmony. ‘My Favourite Things’ was followed by Max, a gold standard tenor singing ‘The Land of Smiles’ from Franz Lehar’s operetta *The Merry Widow* and ‘My Lips, So Hot Are Their Kisses’ from Lehar’s *Giuditta*.

An upbeat a capella version of Mozart’s *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* was followed by Agnieszka rendering Cherubino’s aria ‘Voi che sapete’ (*The Marriage of Figaro*) in the voice of an angel.

Max’s rendering of ‘La ci darem la mano’ (*Don Giovanni*) in an operatic baritone was laced by Langer’s delicate pianism. Franz Alexander Langer sang the inspirational ‘Climb Every Mountain’ with a touch of the blues and then returned to the keyboard to accompany a couple of nuns (Agnieszka and Christa) in habits and wimples who sing the unforgettable ‘How Do You Solve A Problem Like Maria?’ Alois and Diana then danced and sang the appealing ‘Sixteen Going On Seventeen’ with a touch of Langer Jr.’s rich instrumentation.

Austrian folk songs, the inimitable ‘Valderi Valdera’, the Landler folk dance, Christa’s and Franz’s Sr.’s ‘Something Good’, the yodelling ‘Lonely Goatherd’, the poignant ‘Edelweiss’ all crowded into the latter half of the concert. Dance, dynamics and vibrato created the warm sound of ‘So Long Farewell’ as the members peeled off from the stage.

Scripted banter, candour and zest along with incredible music and decorous voices marked a concert that was more than just ‘a wave upon the sand’, more than a just a ‘moonbeam in your hand’. It was a solid touchable survival from the best years of our lives.